



'THE DEFINITIVE PINK FLOYD BOOK'  
Q MAGAZINE

MARK BLAKE

# PINK FLOYD

PIGS MIGHT FLY

FULLY UPDATED WITH A NEW CHAPTER



# **PIGS MIGHT FLY**

## **THE INSIDE STORY OF PINK FLOYD**

**MARK BLAKE**

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# CHAPTER ONE PIGS HAVE FLOWN

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'It would be fantastic if we could do it for something like another Live Aid. But maybe I'm just being terribly sentimental – you know what us old drummers are like.'

Nick Mason

'I really do hope we can do something again.'

Richard Wright

'I don't think we'd get through the first half an hour of rehearsals. If I'm going to be on stage playing music with people, I want it to be with people that I love.'

Roger Waters

'I think Roger Waters has my phone number. But I've no interest in discussing anything with him.'

David Gilmour

Just when it seems as if rock music has long lost its power to offend, Pink Floyd's reunion has thrown the establishment into a panic. It is 2 July 2005, and the band are due to perform at the Live 8 charity concert in London's Hyde Park, but the event has already over-run by nearly an hour. In the words of the 1960s counter-culture from which Pink Floyd emerged, 'The Man' is not happy. Except 'The Man' is now Tessa Jowell, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. Word filters back to the media that she has called an emergency meeting backstage and is threatening to end the show early, fearful that a crowd of 200,000 people spilling into the capital's streets in the small hours will constitute an act of public disorder.

The last time David Gilmour, Richard Wright, Nick Mason and Roger Waters fell even remotely foul of a politician was some twenty-five years earlier. Then, Pink Floyd's hit single, 'Another Brick in the Wall Part 2', featured a choir of London inner city schoolchildren shouting a chorus of 'We don't need no education', much to the disgust of the then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher.

In 2005, though, the political landscape has undergone a seismic shift. Live 8 has been staged to raise awareness about Third World deprivation and to urge world leaders, convening for the following week's G8 Summit, to tackle the issue of poverty. However, one of those very same leaders, Prime Minister Tony Blair, has just let slip that, regardless of the band's political motivation, he is looking forward to watching Pink Floyd's performance at Live 8. Blair is a rock fan, a sometime guitar player and, briefly, the lead singer in a band while at university. When press articles about the PM's rock 'n' roll years appear, they're predictably accompanied by a photo of the youthful Blair in 1972, beaming behind ripples of unkempt long hair. If it wasn't for the grin, he could even pass for a member of Pink Floyd, or, at worst, a member of their road crew, perhaps one 'let go' for being too cheerful by hand and getting under Roger Waters' feet.

Who knows whether the Floyd-loving Prime Minister lent his voice to the argument? But, after the emergency meeting, which involved the Metropolitan Police and the Royal Parks Agency, Tessa

Jowell allows the show to continue. There is even talk of blankets being distributed to those audience members wishing to spend the night in the park. News of the near-cancellation will only make it back to the viewing public in the following day's newspapers. But to anyone even dimly aware of the shared history between Pink Floyd's members, the real miracle is that they have agreed to be here in the first place.

Live 8 has been a day filled with glowing and not-so-glowing performances, alongside the usual crash moments that occur when pop stars get anywhere near a worthy cause. Organiser Sir Bob Geldof has rounded up the heads of pop's royal family, using the same persuasive tactics deployed when staging Live Aid in 1985: namely, the implied suggestion that any band that refuses will dent the credibility for ever. U2, Madonna, Sir Elton John, Sir Paul McCartney and numerous younger, unknighthed rock stars have agreed to give their services for free. The bill is random, newcomers following old hands, but, as the day wears on, a pecking order of sorts emerges.

Around the world, nine further concerts are taking place in cities such as Rome, Berlin and Philadelphia. For many gathered at these events, though, it is a single performance, taking place tonight in London, that generates the greatest anticipation. As Geldof grudgingly admits, 'In the UK, why this band, with such a painful history of disorder, have agreed to do this, is a far bigger story than Live 8 itself.' On the day that Pink Floyd's appearance is announced, whispers circulate of a promoter guaranteeing \$250 million for the four to tour.

Pink Floyd's recording career began in 1967. They have since sold over 30 million copies of the 1973 album, *Dark Side of the Moon*, alone. Yet their public falling-out has sometimes threatened to overwhelm their artistic achievements. It has been more than twenty-four years since the four members shared a stage. In the meantime, Gilmour, Wright and Mason have forged ahead with the Floyd name, releasing albums and staging tours, while Roger Waters, previously the group's bass guitarist, but also their most prolific songwriter and acknowledged ideas man, has raged from the sidelines, once declaring that his former colleagues 'took my child and sold her into prostitution, and I'll never forgive them for that'.

Forgiveness may not be on the agenda, but today, the four have struck a truce, of sorts. Pink Floyd haven't made an album since 1994, and, under normal circumstances, coaxing what guitarist David Gilmour describes as 'this great lumbering behemoth to rouse itself out of its torpor' would have been an arduous process. Yet with the lure of a good cause and Geldof's expert arm-twisting, it has taken just three weeks between the reluctant Gilmour agreeing to play and the re-formed Floyd arriving on stage in Hyde Park.

At 10.17 p.m., David Beckham, officially the biggest footballer in Britain, introduces Robbie Williams, officially the biggest pop star in Britain, on stage. Williams's voice is noticeably frayed, but he slips easily into his routine – part boy band heart-throb, part Norman Wisdom – camping it up and making it difficult to imagine anyone having the crowd quite so on their side.

Under the circumstances, it doesn't bode well for next act, The Who. In 1964, Pink Floyd drummer Nick Mason, then studying architecture at Regent Street Polytechnic, watched The Who perform 'My Generation' and experienced a moment of epiphany: 'Yes, *that's* what I want to do. With two of their number now gone, The Who's surviving members, Pete Townshend and Roger Daltrey, plus hired hands, plough through 'Who Are You' and 'Won't Get Fooled Again'. They avoid any direct communication with the crowd and, in the case of Townshend and his impenetrable wraparound shades, any eye contact. The Who's performance is ferociously tight, with glimpses of

their former chippy glory, but it seems to be over almost before it has begun.

The show is approaching its tenth hour, the park is submerged in inky darkness, McCartney is strapping on his boots to play the closing slot and, on the sidelines, presumably, Tessa Jowell's blankets are being unpacked for those planning a long night under the stars.

At 10.57 p.m., without any fanfare or a celebrity introduction, an eerie yet familiar sound begins drifting across the park. Any remaining roadies on stage suddenly disappear into the wings. The sound rises in volume: the steady, metronomic pulse of a heartbeat. Searchlights sweep over the audience, the video screen behind the stage flickers into life, and the heartbeat grows louder. Then comes the voice: *'I've been mad for fucking years.'* A snippet of speech from a Pink Floyd roadie recorded nearly thirty years earlier at Abbey Road Studios. It's followed by the ominous whirr of helicopter blades, a ringing cash register, and a disengaged cackle of laughter repeated again and again, before segueing into a long, hysterical scream; the closing moment of *'Speak to Me'*, the very first track of *Dark Side of the Moon*.

The goosebumping scream seems to rise in pitch and volume, then is replaced by the soothing opening bars of *'Breathe'*. As the searchlights dim and the stage is bathed in light, the audience is finally allowed their first proper view of the men on stage. In a curious reversal of the decree by the Wizard of Oz to 'pay no attention to the man behind the curtain', the men are all we're left with. The flying pig and aerial shots of Battersea Power Station drifting on the video screen behind the stage are familiar Floyd motifs, but, for once, they fail to draw the attention away from the group themselves. In the past, Pink Floyd thrived on their anonymity. As their success grew so did their stage sets; a stage designed to divert an audience's gaze away from the four unremarkable-looking, long-haired men on stage. By 1980, they played behind a specially constructed wall, as part of Roger Waters' lordly protest at the dehumanising nature of the music industry. When Gilmour coaxed 'the lumbering behemoth' back into service in the eighties and nineties, he, Mason and Wright were augmented by younger session musicians, shimmying female backing singers and a Spielberg-style stage show with blinding lasers that over-whelmed the original band members.

Tonight, Pink Floyd look curiously real. They could be any group of fifty-something businessmen on a dress-down Friday, or assembled in the clubhouse waiting for the rain to subside and a round of golf to commence, even if their shared uniform of faded jeans might contravene club rules. At the back, Nick Mason, his expression frozen somewhere between studious concentration and a knowing smile, patters around his kit. The recent author of a book about the band, Mason has become the group's most publicly visible and media-savvy member, although his decision to continue in Pink Floyd after Waters' departure led to a rift with his close friend that only healed in recent years. The group's self-appointed diplomat (*'I'm the Henry Kissinger of rock,'* he informs journalists later) Mason has also been instrumental in helping Geldof broker this reunion.

Mason gave up studying architecture in 1966, when the fledgling Pink Floyd signed their first management deal. He always planned to go back to it, if playing drums in a rock 'n' roll band didn't work out. Now, three decades on, the walrus moustache and crown of long dark hair that were his visual traits throughout the early seventies are long gone. Clean-shaven, a little jowly, with his grey hair undiminished but cut short, the sixty-year-old drummer now resembles the architect he nearly became. His white shirt even displays a few telltale creases, suggesting that it's fresh out of a box.

Stage left, Richard Wright hunches over his keyboards. Wearing a dark linen jacket over a white shirt, Wright's rather hangdog demeanour once prompted an observer to liken him to 'an ex-champion jockey down on his luck'. In truth, while briefly studying to become an architect himself, Wright has an artier air about him still, and looks more like a semi-retired seventies rock star than his drumming

counterpart. A gifted musician, Wright found himself relegated in Pink Floyd, a victim of his own reticence and the strong personalities surrounding him. In 1979, he suffered the ignominy of being forced out of the band by Roger Waters, on the grounds that he wasn't contributing sufficiently to the recording of their latest album, *The Wall*. Wright endured a period of depression and a spell in exile before slowly being reintroduced into the band under Gilmour's aegis, and eventually acquiring a stake in the group he'd helped to form.

In worn-out denim and black T-shirt, David Gilmour gazes imperiously into the middle distance. More than any of his bandmates, Gilmour has always looked like the quintessential seventies hippie musician: barefoot, laid-back, one hank of his long hair usually tucked behind his ear to keep it off his face as he fussed with the settings on his amp, or nudged an effects pedal with his toes. The hair is long gone, the remains shaved tight to the scalp, and the waistline is thicker. But Gilmour seems to carry himself with greater confidence now. Cradling his guitar, he sets about singing lyrics written by his one-time nemesis – Roger Waters. Gilmour has been Pink Floyd's only frontman since the mid-1980s. The target for most of Waters' ire, he has overseen two platinum-selling Floyd albums and record-breaking tours without his former partner. He exchanges thin smiles with Mason and the crowd, including his wife and some of his children watching from the enclosure in front of the stage, but barely glances at the bassist.

Just a few feet away, Roger Waters mans his own corner. His greying hair is longer, still touching the collar of a washed-out blue shirt. His sleeves are rolled up, revealing an expensive-looking watch that jangles every time he moves. Waters doesn't seem so much to play his bass as assault it. Chortling regally, he scowls and jerks his head in time to the music while wringing the neck of his instrument. He smiles frequently, but bares his teeth and the grin becomes disconcertingly aggressive. Despite this threatening demeanour, Waters looks delighted to be back on stage with the same men he threatened with legal action twenty years previously. Tellingly, while Gilmour sings, Waters mouths the words, as if reminding all those watching that these are *his* songs.

'Breathe' is a balmy, low-key overture. The sweet guitar figure prompts the obligatory raising of glowing cigarette lighters above the heads of the crowds, while beatific smiles appear on the faces of those who've spent the past ten and a half hours hunkered down in their vantage points waiting for this moment. Written by the then thirty-year-old Waters, 'Breathe' set out the lyrical agenda of *Dark Side of the Moon*; a plaintive exploration of the fears and insecurities of early adulthood, the realisation that, in the bass player's own words, 'you've been sitting around waiting for life to start only to suddenly realise that it's already started.' That it's being rendered by the same men thirty years later makes it seem all the more prescient.

With barely a word of acknowledgement to the crowd, 'Breathe' segues into 'Money', the US single that helped to break Pink Floyd in America. In contrast, this is loud, overdriven hard rock. The lyrics have since become a predictable target for those dismissive of Floyd's multi-millionaire status. But its subject matter is pertinent for Live 8 and, as Mason later explains, 'Sir Bob wanted us to do it.' Either way, the sheer drive and tempo of the song makes it ideal for an outdoor event. Gilmour solos restlessly, before the song is hewn in two by a saxophone solo from Dick Parry, the same musician who played on the original track, who ambles on stage, also looking as if bound for the ninth hole. As the pair negotiate the song's final bend, there is a flicker of eye contact between Gilmour and Waters. Then it's gone.

Backstage earlier, Nick Mason had calculated that there would be 'over three hundred years of old rock 'n' roll experience' on stage. But it's the group's life experience that's important. As one Floyd insider once put it, 'Pink Floyd's music is like a beautiful girl walking down the street who won't talk to you.'

to you.’ For a band notable for their corseted English reserve and inability to communicate with each other outside the music, this outbreak of peace has brought all the humanity and emotion concealed in their songs to the surface. Suddenly, it all makes perfect sense.

In the context of today’s performance, ‘Wish You Were Here’ sounds like what it is: a simple love song to a departed friend. Gilmour and Waters both play acoustic guitars, while another Floyd familiar, second guitarist Tim Renwick, steps out of the shadows to help them along. Waters sings the second verse, his harsher, cracked voice a contrast to Gilmour’s sweeter tone. The song is short, simple and rapturously received. Its inspiration and meaning is not lost on this audience. It is a song partly about the one member of the original Pink Floyd not on stage tonight.

The closing song is as inevitable as it is anticipated. To have not played it would have been seen as heresy. ‘Comfortably Numb’ is taken from *The Wall*, a concept album about a rock star’s tortuous decline. Sharing the lead vocals again, Waters and Gilmour sing of *The Wall*’s burnt-out musician slipping into pillowy, drug-induced nirvana, before Gilmour delivers the pay-off moment – a guitar solo that carries the song to a grand, Hollywood climax, the sort plundered inexpertly by so many rock bands since. It’s grandiose, spectacular and oddly moving.

Previously stoic expressions break into relieved grins as the four wander to the centre of the stage. Waters, his arm already around Mason and Wright, gestures towards an uncomfortable-looking Gilmour, mouthing the words, ‘Come on.’ Hesitantly, the guitarist allows himself to be embraced, and the reunited Pink Floyd take their bow. A slogan in the audience captures the moment: ‘Pink Floyd Reunited! Pigs Have Flown.’ At 11.15 p.m., Sir Paul McCartney strides on stage to play Live 8’s closing set. But even he can’t shift the attention away from what has come before. In the US, there is speculative talk of lucrative reunion tours and the possibility of another Pink Floyd album. In the UK, the *Guardian* more irreverently concedes that although the band members ‘look like senior partners in a firm of chartered accountants ... twenty-four years after they last shared a stage, they sound fantastic.’

Watching their performance on TV, backstage at the Canadian Live 8 event in Barrie, was Bob Ezrin, Floyd’s effusive long-time collaborator and co-producer of *The Wall*. ‘I thought it was stunning, the stuff legends are made of,’ he enthuses a few weeks later. ‘I was so overjoyed and, yeah, I have to admit, I cried. Then I became slowly aware that everyone was watching *me* watch Pink Floyd.’

For the band’s followers, record companies, dewy-eyed former colleagues, everyone, Live 8 offered hope of a longer-term reconciliation. David Gilmour swiftly quashed any such speculation. ‘It’s in the past for me. Done it. I don’t have any desire to go back there,’ he said. ‘It’s great to put some of that bitterness behind us, but that’s as far as it goes.’

Before rehearsals for Live 8, David Gilmour and Roger Waters had last spent time in each other’s company on 23 December 1987, in the words of the guitarist, to ‘thrash out the terms of our divorce’. Convening on Gilmour’s houseboat-cum-studio, the pair finalised the deal with an accountant and a computer to settle the terms of a legal document relating to use of the name Pink Floyd.

Previously, Waters had filed law suits against both Gilmour and Mason, believing that the band’s name should have been put to rest following his official departure in 1985. For nearly twenty years, Waters had been the group’s dominant songwriter, devising the original concepts behind albums such as *Dark Side of the Moon* and *The Wall*, writing the bulk of the lyrics and, in his own words, ‘driving the band’. Refusing to cede to his demands, Gilmour and Mason had elected to continue as Pink Floyd. Three months before this final meeting, the pair had released a new Floyd album, *A Momentary Lapse of Reason*, signing up Richard Wright to play on the subsequent tour. Two months later, despite being



denounced by Waters as 'a fair forgery', the album had notched up platinum sales, confirming that the Pink Floyd brand was strong enough to weather even the loss of a key member.

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Then again, it wasn't the first time the band had lost one of its number. At Live 8, Roger Waters had acknowledged the one Pink Floyd member missing that night, dedicating 'Wish You Were Here' to 'everyone that's not here, but particularly, of course, Syd'.

Syd Barrett, once Pink Floyd's lead singer, guitarist and guiding light, had dropped out of both the band and the music business some three decades earlier. As his former bandmates performed to over 100,000 fans in Hyde Park and to a television audience of over 2 billion people around the world, Syd Barrett remained at home in a semi-detached house in suburban Cambridge. At his own request, Barrett no longer had any direct contact with Pink Floyd or wished to be reminded of his time in the band. For him, it had long been over.

# CHAPTER TWO THE ENDLESS SUMMER

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'Freedom is what I'm after.'

Syd Barre

It was made public four days after the event. On Friday, 7 July 2006, Syd Barrett died. The cause of death was given as pancreatic cancer, though his health had been declining for many years. Syd's family informed David Gilmour, who relayed the news to his former bandmates and others in the Floyd's circle of friends. Respecting Syd's family's wishes, none of Pink Floyd had seen or spoken to Syd in many years. When the news finally broke worldwide on Tuesday, 11 July, photographs of Barrett appeared on the front pages of newspapers across the world. It was an extraordinary and unprecedented reaction to the death of a man who had not made a record in over thirty years, and had not spoken about his time as a pop star for just as long.

In the spring of 1968, Pink Floyd had parted company with their original singer and childhood friend. By then, David Gilmour had joined the group to provide some musical stability, as Barrett's drug use and increasingly fractious state of mind had rendered him a liability. In January that year, on their way to perform a show, the rest of the band took the decision not to collect Syd, a decision that would have a profound effect on the rest of their lives.

The week before Pink Floyd's Live 8 performance, the *London Evening Standard* despatched a journalist to Barrett's house in Cambridge, in an attempt to interview the band's elusive former singer. Barrett refused to answer the door. His sister Rosemary revealed that she had told her brother of Pink Floyd's imminent reunion, only to be met with a blank response. 'That is another life for him,' she explained, 'another world in another time.' The nickname of Syd, acquired in that previous life, had been abandoned. For many years Syd had been known once again as Roger Barrett.

The anonymous semi-detached house at 6 St Margaret's Square, Cambridge, where Barrett spent his final years, gave away very little about the identity of its sole occupant. There were none of the trappings beloved by rock stars of all generations: no wall-mounted gold discs to be glimpsed through the gaps in the curtains or expensive sports cars lined up in the driveway. Yet there was none of the neglect some might expect after hearing the rumours and whispered half-truths about the mental state of its owner. Barrett had lived there alone since the death of his mother in 1991. He had never married, fathered any children or held down a job for a significant length of time since his alter ego left Pink Floyd in the 1960s.

Every so often the outside world would impinge on his private universe. Pictures of the navy-blue front door would be splashed across the newspapers, alongside an image of the occupant himself. Caught unawares on his doorstep by photographers, Syd always looked baffled, sometimes angry or scared, invariably half-dressed with a middle-age paunch on display. Any glimpse of his down-at-heels appearance supplied more grist to the Syd Barrett rumour mill.

Syd would undergo these intrusions whenever his past life became a topic of interest in the present day. When Pink Floyd reconvened without him to play Live 8, it was inevitable that the press would descend. Previously, during the media frenzy surrounding acid house raves in the late 1980s, Barre

was held up by the *News of the World* as a cautionary example of the dangers of taking LSD. Of course, they knew he would never sue. But then, who knew what he might do? Neighbours spoke of hearing deathly screams in the middle of the night, while others said they'd heard him bark like a dog. Since the early nineties, though, Roger Barrett simply spent his days painting, reading and cycling around the local shops. He led a quiet, though not completely reclusive existence. Invariably, after each intrusion on his privacy, the trail would go cold again and Syd would be left alone, with only the occasional uninvited fan knocking on his door.

Yet, whatever their context, the photographs of the old Syd Barrett that accompanied these newspaper exposés were still unavoidably compelling. Those same pictures appeared again after his death. Taken almost forty years earlier, they showed Syd dolled up in his best Kings Road clothes, wavy hair teased into an explosive halo, eyes smouldering into the camera, as he blueprinted the image of the doomed rock star, a cliché adopted by countless would-be Syds ever since.

'He was someone that people would point out on the street,' recalls David Gilmour of his childhood friend. 'Syd had that charisma, that magnetism.'

The shared history of Pink Floyd's three chief protagonists – Barrett, Gilmour and Waters – is irrevocably tied to the city of their youth.

Cambridge's reputation as a seat of learning began as early as the thirteenth century. With the striking architecture of its colleges and the River Cam winding its way through the city, it retains a traditional English quality. Yet as a counterpoint to any quaintness, the landscape around the city comprises rugged fenland. The atmosphere seeped into Pink Floyd's music from the start. The title of the group's first album, *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn*, was taken from *The Wind in the Willows*, Kenneth Grahame's 1908 children's novel set on a riverbank. In the chapter of the same name, two of the book's animal characters embark on a bizarre spiritual quest. 'Grantchester Meadows', Roger Waters' softly played interlude on the band's *Ummagumma* album, was named after the beautiful heavily wooded riverbank area tucked away towards the south of the city, near David Gilmour's family home.

At the time of the three principal Floyds' arrival into the world, Cambridge was, as one of the childhood peers now describes it, 'a place where licensed eccentricity was considered permissible. You'd see all these brilliant but rather odd people such as Francis Crick who discovered DNA, cycling eccentrically down the street.' Syd's father was another familiar, eccentric figure, often to be seen cycling on an upright bicycle down Hills Road.

Dr Arthur Max Barrett, known to all as Max, was a university demonstrator in pathology at the local Addenbrooke's hospital. Later, he would take up the position of morbid anatomist at the university. In his spare time he was a noted amateur painter and botanist, with the privilege of his own set of keys to the city's botanical gardens. Displaying the musical talent for which his son would become better known, Dr Barrett was also a member of the Cambridge Philharmonic Society.

He was married to Winifred Garrett, the great-granddaughter of Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, the country's first female physician in 1865. The Barretts had five children: Alan, Donald, Ruth, Roger (later known as Syd) and Rosemary. Syd was born on 6 January 1946 in the first family home at 6 Glisson Road, near to the centre of Cambridge. Three years later, the family moved to a nearby five-bedroom house at 183 Hills Road.

A few minutes' walk from the Barretts' new home was Rock Road, where the family of George Roger Waters would settle when he was just two years old. Roger's father, Eric Fletcher Waters, had grown up in County Durham, the grandson of a coal miner and prominent Labour Party agent. He

became a schoolteacher and, being a devout Christian and conscientious objector, refused to join up at the outbreak of the war. Instead he did voluntary work and drove an ambulance during the Blitz and joined the Communist Party. But halfway through the conflict, Eric had a change of heart and decided to sign up for the war. He eventually joined the City of London Regiment, 8th Battalion Royal Fusiliers as a second lieutenant.

Preceded by one brother, John, Roger was born on 6 September 1943. His mother, formerly Mary Whyte, was also a schoolteacher. When Eric was posted overseas, Mary moved with her sons from Great Bookham, in Surrey, to Cambridge, believing they would be safer from German bombing raids over London.

Eric Waters was declared missing presumed dead on 18 February 1944, during the Allies' assault on the beaches of Anzio, on the Italian coast. Roger was just five months old at the time.

David Jon Gilmour arrived in the world on 6 March 1946. The Gilmours' home at the time was a village outside Cambridge called Trumpington. The family moved several times, before finally settling at 109 Grantchester Meadows in the Newnham district, near the River Cam, when David was ten years old. His father, Doug, and mother, Sylvia, met at Cambridge's Homerton College, where both were training to be teachers. Sylvia went on to become a film editor, eventually working for the BBC. Doug Gilmour became a senior lecturer in zoology at the university. The couple had four children: David, his brothers Peter and Mark, and a sister, Catherine.

'Cambridge was a great place to grow up,' says Gilmour. 'You're in a town dominated by education, you're surrounded by bright people. But then it's also got this rural heart that spreads practically to the centre. There were great places to meet up with friends.'

While Gilmour has no memory of the meeting, he first encountered Barrett and Waters when the three were enrolled by their parents at a Saturday morning art club at Homerton College. Both Waters and Barrett attended Morley Memorial primary school in Blinco Grove, where Mary Waters was working as a teacher. It was here that Syd's precocious talents first became apparent. Noted for his gift of mimicry, he and sister Rosemary (known to most as Roe) also won a shared prize for playing the piano when Syd was seven years old.

Nick Barraclough, a fellow Morley Memorial pupil, later to become a musician and BBC broadcaster, remembers Syd as 'a beautiful boy and incredibly artistic. My sister was in his class. They would have been about ten or eleven, and the pupils were asked to paint their impressions of a hot day. Most of the children drew a beach or a sun. Roger – as he was still called then – drew a girl lying on a beach in a bikini with an ice-lolly dripping over her, which all seemed terribly advanced considering his age.' All three boys sat and passed their 11-plus, the then compulsory test which divided British schoolchildren into those deemed intelligent enough for a grammar school education or, if not, the secondary modern school system. 'My father was a primary school teacher,' remembers Barraclough, 'and the two Rogers both came to him at different times to be coached in advance for the 11-plus.'

Waters was enrolled at Cambridgeshire High School for Boys (formerly the Cambridge and County School) in Hills Road in 1954. Now reinvented as Hills Road Sixth Form College, back then 'the County' was, as one former pupil described it, 'a grammar school that thought it was a public school with masters, mortar boards and sadism'. The school had a record for high academic achievement with a similarly impressive Oxbridge output.

Roger became a noted sportsman: a wicket keeper in the school's first XI cricket team, and an impressive fly half in the rugby team. He also joined the school's Combined Cadet Force, initially against his wishes, spending some time at the weekend naval training school at HMS *Ganges*. Part

the Force's training involved target practice and marksmanship, to which he was better disposed. However, although he was smart and witty, his sharp tongue and overbearing streak could also make him unpopular. On at least one occasion his fellow pupils beat him up. 'I think I was roundly hated by most of the people involved,' admitted Waters later.

'Roger was in the year above me,' remembers fellow County boy Seamus O'Connell. 'I was friendly with another chap called Andrew Rawlinson, whose nickname was Willa, and who was a great friend of Roger's. The relationship between Roger and I was a bit fraught at school as he wasn't always the most pleasant, but we still counted each other as friends.'

Later, tiring of the Cadet Force, and in a fit of pique, Roger simply handed in his uniform and refused to attend further training, leading to a dishonourable discharge. Fellow County pupil Tim Renwick, who would go on to work with Pink Floyd as a guitarist, recalls the scandal: 'I was a couple of years younger than Roger, but everyone in the school heard about it. He caused rather a fuss. Though I'm sure I can remember hearing that Roger told them he was leaving on the grounds that he was a conscientious objector.'

Waters' childhood experiences would find their way time and again into Pink Floyd's music, leaving even the most inattentive listener in little doubt about his feelings for life at the County.

'Roger tolerated his schooling,' said Mary Waters. 'His attitude was, "You have to get on with it and make the most of it."'

'I hated every second of it, apart from games,' Roger insisted. 'The regime at school was a very oppressive one. It was being run on pre-war lines, where you bloody well did as you were told, and there was nothing to do for us but to rebel against it. It's funny how, when you get these guys at school, they will always pick on the weakest kid. So the same kids who are susceptible to bullying by other kids are also susceptible to bullying by the teachers. It's like smelling blood. They home in on it. Most of the teachers were absolute swine.'

'I always presumed that Pink Floyd's *The Wall* was about the masters at the County,' says Nick Barraclough, who followed Waters to the school. 'The headmaster there at the time was a man named Eagling, who was, to this day, the scariest man I have ever known. The two Rogers would have been right in the thick of all that.'

Being schooled after the Second World War in an education system still behind the times, hampered by pre-war attitudes, and hardly attuned to a generation enjoying the peace and relative prosperity not afforded to their parents, the late fifties was an era of opportunity for teenagers, unlike any before.

Railing against the school system, Waters would later describe an episode that encapsulated the contempt. Deciding to seek revenge on the school's gardener for some real or imagined slight, he and a group of co-conspirators went into the school orchard with a stepladder and singled out the gardener's favourite tree. They then proceeded to eat every apple on the tree, taking care not to remove any from the branches. Recounting the incident for *Musician* magazine over thirty years later, Waters proudly recalled 'being filled with a real sense of achievement' after the elaborate prank.

Three years behind Waters, Syd Barrett's progress through the County was marked by an overriding passion for art and a keen interest in poetry and drama. Also displaying an anti-authoritarian streak, Barrett could charm his way out of trouble by being smart, good-looking and, as Gilmour recalls, 'a sharp cookie, very able in many areas'. Nevertheless, adhering to more conventional lines, Syd rose through the ranks to become patrol leader, Kingfisher patrol, in his local Scout troop.

In June 1961, aged fifteen, Syd began a relationship with Elizabeth Gausden (known by everyone

Libby), a pupil at the nearby Cambridge Grammar School for Girls. 'Syd actually had a girlfriend already, a very pretty, fluffy German girl called Verena Frances,' remembers Libby. 'But we hit it off. He always used to say, "You're not the prettiest, but you're the funniest girl ever". He was a wonderful boy. Everybody loved him.'

John Gordon first encountered Syd in the County's art class. 'He shone from the first day,' he remembers. 'His hair was longer than anyone else's. He spoke his mind to the teachers and would even walk out of a class if he was being told off.'

Syd frequently refused to wear his school blazer and was also notable for wearing his shoes without laces, a trait that continued into adulthood. Encouraged by his parents, Syd also indulged the keen creative streak that had first surfaced at the Morley Memorial, participating in poetry readings and public speaking. But his adolescence would be blighted. On 11 December 1961, Dr Barrett died. 'His father had been ill for a long time,' says Libby Gausden. 'He had cancer and it was very painful, and I think it was almost a great relief to the children as he was suffering so much before he died. Syd was a great diary writer. Each page was about a foot and a half long, and he would fill every page. But on the day his father died, he just wrote "Poor Dad died today".'

Many people have speculated about the impact of his father's death on Syd. David Gilmour, who spent a great deal of time with his friend in those years, says that 'Syd never spoke about it. People say his father's death changed him, but at the time it was difficult to recall any great change.'

'I didn't know Syd's father or his brothers, so I never really knew where the men in the family got to,' recalls John Gordon. 'Syd always seemed more worldly than me, and had more freedom and experience, and, after his father died, he seemed to readily take on a lot more responsibility.'

Once his older siblings moved out of 183 Hills Road, Syd commandeered a large room at the front of the house as his bedroom, while his mother let out the former bedrooms to lodgers, many of whom were attending the university and who included at least one minor British aristocrat and a future Japanese Prime Minister.

If Waters and, to some extent, Barrett were displaying an anti-authoritarian streak, they now had an official excuse. With the advent of Bill Haley and The Comets' hit single 'Rock Around the Clock' in 1955, the media had officially announced the invention of the teenager, and their designated soundtrack – rock 'n' roll. Two years later, Elvis Presley would give this new music an iconic image and provide a role model for a generation. Syd's brother Alan played saxophone in a skiffle group, and Syd himself began messing around with a ukelele before persuading his mother to buy him a Hofner acoustic guitar.

'After school, Syd and I would meet in the corridor and I would go over to his, as he lived almost opposite the school,' remembers John Gordon. 'My father was a musician, but part of me didn't want to be like him, so I'd shunned learning the piano but wanted to learn guitar with Syd. He'd also got hold of some American imports and I had an older uncle who was bringing in Bill Haley and Eddie Cochran 78s and 45s. I would take them over to Syd's and we'd try and learn guitar from them. Syd was into everything. Everyone now talks about him liking Bo Diddley, but he was into much broader stuff than that.'

The fourteen-year-old Waters was the ideal age for rock 'n' roll, but was initially wary. Instead, his musical tastes skittered between Dixieland jazz and blues singers such as Bessie Smith. 'Anything,' he admitted later, 'but rock 'n' roll.' Having acquired a guitar from an uncle, Waters also began taking tentative classical lessons with a local female teacher, but later admitted that he'd given up 'as it hurt my fingers, and I found it much too hard'.

Meanwhile, David Gilmour shared none of his future bandmate's suspicion about rock 'n' roll. 'I'm not sure if "Rock Around the Clock" was the very first record I bought, but it must have been one of the first,' he recalls. (He later revealed that the 78rpm disc was destroyed when the family's au pair accidentally sat on it.) Gilmour was much more taken with Elvis Presley's 'Heartbreak Hotel', which followed a year later. At home, his parents' record collection included numerous blues 78s. Like Waters and Barrett, Gilmour had also discovered Radio Luxembourg, with its diverse mix of music that was outside the remit of any existing British radio station – 'All sorts of strange sounds' – and which would have a marked influence on a whole generation of English rock musicians.

While Gilmour's musical education was already underway, his education proper had begun at the age of five when he was sent to boarding school. Doug Gilmour decided to take a six-month sabbatical from Cambridge University and go to Wisconsin in the American Midwest with Sylvia. The children were despatched to Steeple Claydon in Buckinghamshire where they remained until the end of the following school year.

'My parents loved each other and enjoyed each other's company, but, to be honest, I think they found us rather inconvenient,' Gilmour told *Mojo* magazine in 2006. 'We holidayed together when we were very little, but as soon as we got to the age where we could be bounced off into something else like joining the Boy Scouts, we never went on holiday together again.' Years later, Gilmour would rediscover letters and a diary from the time, revealing that even when his parents had returned to Cambridge, David and his siblings remained in Steeple Claydon until the end of the school year. 'These things seem perfectly normal at the time. It's only later when you think, "Hang on, that wasn't so great.'"

At the age of eleven, just as Barrett made his way to the County, Gilmour returned to Cambridge and was enrolled at the Perse Preparatory School for Boys. Situated just a few doors down from Syd Barrett's family home, the Perse was a fee-paying grammar school run on strict authoritarian lines. Its old boys included Sir Peter Hall, founder of the Royal Shakespeare Company and director of the Royal National Theatre. Dating back to the seventeenth century, a quarter of the Perse's pupils were boarders, and all pupils were made to attend Saturday morning lessons, contributing to the atmosphere of, in the words of one of its former alumni, 'a rather snooty public school'.

Though naturally bright, Gilmour's approach to academia was found wanting. 'I was lazy,' he admits now. Elvis may have been a primary influence, but it was the arrival of a pair of guitar-playing high-harmony singing siblings – the Everly Brothers and their 1957 breakthrough hit 'Bye Bye Love' – that was pivotal in Gilmour picking up the guitar.

'I loved the Everlys. When I was thirteen, our next-door neighbour's son was given a guitar, and he was completely tone deaf and had no interest in it whatsoever. So I borrowed it and never gave it back. I started plonking away on it, and my parents were pretty happy about that, and got me the Pete Seeger guitar book and record. These elementary lessons were wonderful.'

Also painstakingly working his way through the Seeger instruction manual was Gilmour's friend Rado Klose, who, using his middle name as Bob Klose, would later go on to become a member of the early Pink Floyd.

'David and I had known each other since we were born,' says Klose. 'His father had met mine before either of them even had families. I can't recall if David actually took lessons from me, but I can remember the two of us listening to that Pete Seeger record and scrambling around listening to Radio Luxembourg. We'd hear a record, and think: How do you play that? And then set about trying to find out. The Ventures' [1960 hit] "Walk Don't Run" was one of those. David instantly picked up how to play it, while it took the rest of us much longer.'

Klose was also a pupil at the County: ‘At that time, your life is totally bound up in school. Syd was the year below me and Roger Waters was the year above. We all had similar musical tastes. For while I was very much into jazz, but only jazz made up until 1935! Then Django Reinhardt. Roger went really into Jimmy Duffee. Discovering the blues, though, was a real moment of epiphany. I remember going into a record shop after school and finding a record by Leadbelly. I didn’t know what it was, but I just liked the name, so the guy in the shop let me take it into the booth and listen. And it was like the essence of everything I’d ever liked in music – but more concentrated.’

While Leadbelly would become a shared favourite for Klose, Gilmour and Waters, the latter four of his musical interests went unappreciated at home. From the age of twelve, Roger had regularly attended jazz concerts at the local Corn Exchange, but, unlike Syd’s mother, Mary Waters had little time for music.

‘She claimed to be tone deaf,’ her son recalled. ‘She had no real interest in the arts. She was very political. Politics was more important than anything else. I certainly didn’t feel encouraged in music either at home or at school.’

In 1961, the same year that Syd Barrett lost his father, Gilmour’s home life underwent a major upheaval. As part of what was commonly known as ‘the brain drain’, in which British academics were lured abroad by high-paying teaching posts, Doug Gilmour was offered a position at New York University, where he was eventually appointed Professor of Genetics. He and Sylvia announced the decision to go for a year. Gilmour’s ten-year-old brother Mark went with them, while his siblings stayed in England; sister Catherine was already attending university. The fifteen-year-old David was invited to the States, but, already fired up by the musical possibilities around him, he chose to stay in Cambridge, where he lodged with a family in Chesterton. Left unsupervised, Gilmour still found it easy to sneak out to attend gigs instead of studying for his O-Level exams. Waters, Barrett and Gilmour, with their shared academic backgrounds, all now had absent fathers, and were striking out independently, muddling towards the beginnings of what would become Pink Floyd.

If Gilmour was the first to embrace rock ‘n’ roll, his future Floyd partners weren’t slow in seeking out a rebellious antidote to the strictures of Cambridge school life, even without Elvis to encourage them. If Waters’ meticulous raid on the Cambridge County orchard seems more like an art prank than a simple act of vandalism, then it’s little wonder. As a university town, Cambridge was perfectly placed to welcome the influence of a new school of non-conformist American underground writers and poets – ‘the Beat Generation’. The writers in question – Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac and William Burroughs – always balked at the title, frequently protesting, ‘Three friends does not make a generation’. Nevertheless, they shared enough of a like-minded vision to warrant the comparison. Ginsberg’s *Howl and Other Poems* (1956) and Burroughs’ novel *The Naked Lunch* (1959) both gained widespread over exposure after running up against obscenity laws. Yet it was Kerouac’s *On the Road*, finally published in 1957 in the wake of the *Howl* trial, that helped establish the Beat Generation’s wider popularity. The story of a poetic drifter, hitching lifts and jumping freight trains across America, popping pills and enjoying casual sex to a soundtrack of bebop jazz, it became required reading material for smart teenagers growing up in a university town.

The Beats’ frantic creativity, anti-conformist stance and spirit of adventure appealed to both Barrett and Waters. In letters to his girlfriend Libby Gausden, Barrett enthused about *On the Road*. Experimenting with his appearance, he adopted the uniform of black trousers and fisherman sweaters, which was popular among art students and jazz fans. Sometime after the death of his father he began to refer to himself occasionally as ‘Syd the Beat’, the ‘Syd’ taken from one Sid Barrett, the



unrelated drummer in a jazz band he'd encountered playing the local Riverside Jazz Café.

'There was at the time,' Waters explained years later, 'this idea of going east in search of adventure.'

Andrew 'Willa' Rawlinson accompanied Waters and others on various trips around Europe. 'We took Roger's mum's car and drove to Istanbul via France, Italy and Greece,' he recalls. 'It took us about three months.' Aged nineteen, Waters joined Rawlinson and others on a jaunt to the Middle East. 'We went in an ambulance called Brutus,' says Rawlinson. 'We knew nothing about engines, put no water in it and it blew up in Beirut. So the five of us went our separate ways. Roger hitched back to England on his own.' It was a trip that would provide an inspiration for his 2003 solo song 'Leaving Beirut', which opened with the line: 'So we left Beirut, Willa and I ...'

By 1962 Syd Barrett's scepticism about rock 'n' roll had diminished. His musical interests now included Americans such as Chuck Berry and Bo Diddley, but also the homegrown instrumental guitar band The Shadows, a key influence on every aspiring guitarist in the early sixties. The release of the first Beatles single, 'Love Me Do', in 1962 and debut album, *Please Please Me*, a year later, gave another inspirational boost to the Cambridge music scene. The Beatles were English, nearer to home, 'more like us', and even the usually sceptical Waters said that 'the songs on their first album were just so good.' Barrett became an evangelical Beatles fan, and, having acquired his first electric guitar and the Holy Grail of learning manuals – the Pete Seeger record and book – started to think about a group of his own.

While Syd and John Gordon would spend time thrashing around on guitars, Syd's first serious attempt came with the formation of Geoff Mott and The Mottoes, centred around their gregarious lead singer Geoff Mottlow, another ex-Cambridge County boy and Roger Waters' rugby team-mate. The group had an ideal rehearsal space in Syd's front room/bedroom and commandeered it for regular Sunday afternoon sessions. Barrett and Nobby Clarke played guitar, Mottlow sang lead vocals, while Clive Welham played drums.

'It was quite possible that when me and Syd first started I didn't even have any proper drums and was playing on a biscuit tin with knives,' says Clive Welham. 'But I bought a kit, started taking lessons and actually got quite good. I can't even remember who our bass player was.' Welham is certain that, contrary to most existing reference books, it wasn't Tony Sainty, a local bassist who would end up playing in bands with David Gilmour. 'I played in bands with Tony later,' insists Clive, 'but not with Syd. There were a lot of people who used to drop by and have a blow. Roger Waters was always round Syd's house, but it was before he was doing music.'

The Mottoes' repertoire revolved around covers of songs by Buddy Holly, Chuck Berry, The Shadows and Eddie Cochran. Years later Barrett would tell the music press that 'the band did a lot of work at private parties', but The Mottoes only played one ticketed event, a fund-raising gig in March 1963 for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament at the local Friends Meeting House, advertised with a poster designed by Roger Waters. The connection was political as well as musical. Roger had followed his mother's interest in left-wing politics by becoming a fundraiser for the *Morning Star* and chairman of the youth section of the local CND. (He later took part in CND marches to Aldermaston.) 'We all behaved ourselves if Roger Waters was around,' laughs Libby Gausden. 'It was like a teacher coming into the room. Being older, Roger certainly looked the part. He had a motorbike before any of us even had driving licences *and* he owned a leather jacket.' The band wouldn't last, but, in 1964 Mottlow's next group, The Boston Crabs, would score a minor hit with the future Northern Soul classic 'Down in Mexico', while Clive Welham would become a fixture on the Cambridge circuit.

At the age of sixteen, Syd's days at the County were drawing to an end and he announced his intention to go to art school. His mother worked in the office of the Cambridge School of Art and to help her son's progress, arranged for Syd and John Gordon to attend extra-curricular Saturday morning art classes. Their diligence paid off, and, in the summer of 1962, both boys enrolled at the school, where Syd, studying Art and Design, would remain for the next two years, cutting a swath through the school and making a lasting impression on lecturers and pupils alike.

'Syd was a very big personality,' remembers fellow student John Watkins. 'I mean this in the nicest possible way, but he had a real mouth on him. John Gordon reckons it was probably because his dad had died. But Syd really pushed it. He wouldn't take bullshit, and he was always pissing about.'

Situated in East Road, the Cambridge School of Art had been founded in the nineteenth century. Ronald Searle, the cartoonist and illustrator of the popular St Trinian's series of books, was a pupil, as were Spitting Image creators Peter Fluck and Roger Law.

'Syd reminded me of a Spanish gypsy,' says Richard Jacobs, a pupil in Barrett's illustration class. 'Later on he used to claim his grandmother was a gypsy. Though I'm not entirely sure we ever believed him. The first time I saw him was in the summer of 1962, and he was carrying an acoustic guitar and wearing Levi's. I was very impressed. This was when the rest of us were all still dressing very straight. There was a common room in the basement area of the college and Syd seemed to commandeer it at break times. He was always sat on the window sill, playing guitar. He used to sing this old music hall thing – "just because my hair is curly, just because my teeth are pearly ..."' (1910 jazz song, 'Shine', later recorded by Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong.)

The school also brought Barrett back into contact with David Gilmour. With Gilmour's parents briefly returned from the US, David was now studying Modern Languages at the Cambridgeshire College of Arts and Technology next door. As John Watkins recalls, he seemed to spend most of his time between lectures in the art school. 'There were several of us who played or, in my case, *had* played guitar, and we started having sessions in the art school at lunchtimes,' says Watkins. 'Dave started sitting in on these, and spending more and more time with us. Before Cambridge, I'd come from Egypt and Cyprus, so I didn't know what was going on in the English music scene. I had a guitar and I started to pick up stuff from Syd, who gave me a few lessons, and I was always hassling Gilmour for new chords. The Beatles were just starting, so Syd would have just learned something like "Twist and Shout", and Dave turned me on to Dylan.' Gilmour had discovered the American singer-songwriter when his parents returned from the US with a copy of his latest album.

'In all the time I saw him there,' says Stephen Pyle, another pupil, 'I never saw Gilmour without that guitar in his hand. He was so single-minded about it, even then.'

While Gilmour was a more reliable teacher for learning new chords, Syd was prone to wilder tricks. 'He took this experimental approach to playing,' remembers another of his Cambridge peers, David Gale. 'One time in his room, I recall Syd picking up a Zippo lighter, which he might have got off an American serviceman, and running it up and down the guitar neck. I also think someone had a Zippo with a musical box inside it that played a few notes, and he ran that up and down the neck of an amplified guitar, getting that bottleneck effect but with the music box tinkling away inside – which was the type of thing he'd end up doing in Pink Floyd.'

In the classroom, Syd was known for his high jinks. One lecturer regularly had his slide show for history lessons disrupted, as Syd led the class out through the rear windows of the darkened room and back in through the door, ensuring a constant stream of reappearing pupils. On other occasions, he would hide his guitar under his desk and begin strumming it with his feet, infuriating the lecturer, who

couldn't understand where the noise was coming from.

'I remember Syd as being obstinate and rebellious with tutors,' says Richard Jacobs. 'He liked to make a scene and would storm out of a lecture hall. He just had this thing where he didn't want to be told what to do. We were all going on a field trip one day and for some reason Syd refused to get on the coach. No idea why. He wouldn't say. He'd just have these tantrums. It was quite feminine in that way.'

John Watkins also observed the unconventional dynamic in the Barrett household: 'Syd had become the man of the house after his dad died. He loved his mum, but he was very funny and very rude to her. I think he was challenging her and seeing how far he could go. His bedroom at home was his domain and if his mother brought in a cup of tea, he'd start shouting, "Get out of the room, woman!"'

'Syd's mother, Win, was a hearty, wonderful woman,' recalls Libby Gausden. 'She only saw the good in people which is why Syd was allowed to get away with murder. She was also older than all our mothers. She had had Syd's brothers, Don and Alan, very early on. Don was in the RAF and Alan was an academic. They were both bald by thirty! Completely different from Syd. But he was just different from the rest of the family. But Syd had been the same before his father died. Syd's dad was *always* into his study. So Syd had always been left alone to do as he pleased.'

Away from the lunchtime music sessions, Syd's approach to his art was frequently erratic but often yielded results. To the frustration of others, Syd spent more time painting in his back garden than at the college, but, with an assessment looming, would show up at the last possible moment with a masterpiece. 'One minute his pictures would be figurative, the next abstract,' recalls John Gordon. 'He was always experimenting, trying out different styles. Somewhere I have a black-and-white photo I took in his back garden of Syd holding a canvas that's nearly as big as him, and it's an abstract, with dark ochre colours, of a bit of fabric – possibly a shirt – slapped on the canvas with paint thrown all over it.'

Syd's behaviour was still, at this point, viewed as nothing more than mildly eccentric, and his drug use was far from public.

'Syd loved his cannabis,' says Libby Gausden. 'He was certainly smoking it at a time when you could still get away with smoking it on the top deck of the bus, which he did. I never smoked it. None of the Cambridge girls did at the time, though I think that changed when some of them went to London.'

'I never saw Syd smoke dope but we knew it was around,' says John Gordon. 'I moved out of home when I went to art school and although I never got into dope, my flat in Clarendon Street was a crack pad, where people used to drop by to smoke. It was one of those places where you'd wake up in the middle of the night and find people baking banana skins in the oven and trying to smoke them. There was a bunch that used to come round that included two local guys, Pip and Emo, who both ended up working for Pink Floyd. They could show up any time of the day or night.'

Ian Carter, known as Pip, was, in the words of one acquaintance, 'a wild boy from the Fens', with a broad East Anglian accent that sometimes rendered him incomprehensible to those outside his immediate circle. Like others in Pink Floyd's network of associates, Carter would make up the numbers in the road crew, employed as a lighting tech (though he would later be described by Nick Mason as 'one of the world's most spectacularly inept roadies').

Iain 'Emo' Moore is remembered by another of his contemporaries as 'a gurning, gesticulating knob-crazed guy, with most of his teeth missing'. Like his friend, Pip, Emo would become a close confidant of both Syd Barrett and David Gilmour. Emo would spend the seventies and early eighties

working as a live-in housekeeper for Gilmour and his first wife Ginger. An occasional actor, he later appeared in numerous pop videos, and had a blink-and-you'll-miss-it cameo in the film of Pink Floyd's *The Wall*, playing best man at the wedding of the character played by Bob Geldof. No longer part of Gilmour's inner circle, he now lives a much quieter life on the English south coast.

'Pip and Emo nurtured Syd and, later, David,' explains one of their peers. 'They looked after both of them, but also enjoyed the benefits of that friendship, especially with Dave Gilmour.' In Pip's case this would mean various drug rehab courses paid for by the Floyd guitarist, while Emo enjoyed the expert ministrations of Gilmour's dentist.

'Everybody in town knew Pip and Emo,' laughs John Gordon. 'Back then, they were mods, always haring around on scooters and hanging around outside Miller's music shop. If you've seen the film *Quadrophenia*, they were both like the character played by Phil Daniels, while Dave and Syd were like the character played by Sting – the cool guy.'

'I met Syd when he was sixteen and I started to get to know Dave when he was seventeen,' says Emo, who was then working in a Cambridge coal yard. 'I used to go round to Syd's and smoke dope all day. Dave knew all these people from school but he didn't know any working-class people like me. I went to a terrible school and didn't learn anything. But we got on well, because I would have liked to have been more like Dave, and there was a part of Dave that I think would have liked to have been more like me. His parents were always pushing him, and he wanted to be free of all that. Whereas I wanted to be pushed and given all the stuff he had been given.'

Among Emo's other well-heeled acquaintances was Nigel Lesmoir-Gordon, a former pupil of Oundle public school, a couple of years older than Emo, and then living in Cambridge with his divorced mother. At Oundle, Lesmoir-Gordon had staged concerts, including a coveted appearance from jazz trumpeter Humphrey Lyttelton. In Cambridge he would arrange a series of poetry readings above the Horse and Groom pub, and was, in the words of one of the Cambridge set, 'terribly hip, with the benefit of looking like a young Alain Delon'.

Syd Barrett intrigued Nigel. 'I went round to some of those Sunday afternoon sessions at Syd's house,' he recalls. 'Syd was younger than us. But we were all very interested in him on account of his extraordinary looks and the fact that he had this strange, charismatic quality.'

Among Lesmoir-Gordon's associates were 'a gang of very hip boys', largely comprising pupils from the County and the Perse, including, among others, Andrew Rawlinson, Paul Charrier, Dave Gale, Seamus O'Connell, Dave Henderson, John Davies, John 'Ponji' Robinson, Anthony Stern, future Pink Floyd sleeve designer Storm Thorgerson and the writer Nick Sedgwick, whose 1989 novel, *Lights Blue with Bulges*, would offer a thinly disguised account of the author and his friends' experiences in Cambridge at the time.

'Syd always thought Dave Gale was a bit of a lad, and he worshipped Nigel Gordon,' recalls Libby Gausden. 'I think that lot all thought we were a bit of a teenybopper crowd because we were a bit younger. But they were all very taken with Syd.'

The group's favoured haunts included Miller's music shop, the El Patio and the Guild coffee bar, the Criterion pub (known locally as 'the Cri'), the Dorothy Ballroom and varying spots along the River Cam. Between 1963 and 1965, as John Davies recalls, 'we made the transformation from schoolboys to aspiring beatniks', swapping school uniforms for black polo necks and leather jackets, listening to Miles Davis, riding Vespas and smoking dope purchased from American GIs on the neighbouring airforce bases at Lakenheath and Mildenhall.

'The El Patio was one of the first expresso bars,' explains Anthony Stern. 'I bunked off school to do the Perse to do a washing-up job there, as I wanted to rebel. The idea of growing up normally was out of the question.'

the case. So we would spend a lot of time doing things that were likely to annoy one's parents. That's how we developed this fascination with the blues. It was the rebellious aspect that appealed. Ah, good. Another way to twist the knife into our parents.'

'In 1962 we were all into Jimmy Smith,' explained Storm Thorgerson. 'Then 1963 brought dope and rock. Syd was one of the first to get into The Beatles and The Stones. Syd used to take his guitar and busk at parties.'

'I was a couple of years older than Syd and at the Perse,' recalls David Gale. 'By the time I was sixteen, Syd and I were on nodding acquaintance. The thing to be in those days was to look bohemian – which Syd did very well. There were two or three cliques that went down to the river during the school holidays. Each clique would have their favoured spots, but there would be commerce between the camps. We'd be on the green near the Mill Pond, next to two pubs – the Mill and the Anchor. Storm's crowd used to go further up near the men's bathing sheds on Sheep's Green where there were some banks and willow trees. The thing to do was hire a punt at one of the boatyards at the Mill and take it down to Grantchester Meadows.'

Aubrey 'Po' Powell would go on to form the Hipgnosis design company with Storm Thorgerson. He had been educated at King's School in neighbouring Ely, and had first encountered County and Perse boys Storm and David Gale during inter-school cricket and rugby matches.

'Later we had a mutual friend in Cambridge, a Liverpool drug-dealer named Nod,' recalls Ely now. 'Which is how I got to know those guys again.' On leaving school, he took a tiny room in the same Clarendon Street house where John Gordon had been living. 'There were loads of people in and out of there,' he remembers. 'The comedian Peter Cook's sister, Sarah, had the basement flat, so we used to hang out with her. Storm's mother's house was next door in Earl Street, so there was a little enclave where we used to congregate.'

Storm Thorgerson's mother, Evangeline, was a potter and school-teacher at Ely Grammar School for Girls, and a friend of Mary Waters. She was separated from Storm's father, and, like Syd, Storm enjoyed the run of the family home. He had spent the early part of his life in the highly liberal Summerhill Free School in Suffolk, an establishment later dubbed by the media 'The Do What You Please School'. 'This meant that Storm always seemed terribly advanced for his years,' recalls one of his peers.

'Storm used to make films, using his friends as actors,' recalls Anthony Stern. 'He made one called *The Meal* which he shot at my parents' house. It was a surreal fantasy, and at one point Nick Sedgwick got "eaten". So there was Nick's semi-naked body lying on my parents' table, which raised a lot of tut-tuts from my father and lots of "For God's sake, Anthony, what are you doing?"'

As well as coming from highly academic families, many of the group had another thing in common. Storm's father, like Nigel's, was separated from his mother. Meanwhile, Syd, Roger Waters and John 'Ponji' Robinson had lost their fathers. 'There was,' as John Davies explains, 'a lot of us with fathers that were physically or emotionally absent. Or both.'

'Almost all of us had parents that had gone through World War Two,' elaborates Anthony Stern. 'My father suffered from a complete inability to talk about his experiences in the war. Added to that was the fact that in Cambridge you were surrounded by this enormous weight of history and all the brilliant people. My parents were also academics at St John's College. So as the children of academic parents, as was Syd, we grew up feeling as if nothing we did was ever going to be considered good enough. I think many of us suffered from what I now call "The Cambridge Syndrome".'

Left to his own devices, Storm Thorgerson's bedroom at Earl Street became, as one of the crowd

described it, 'a fuelling station' for the aspirant beatniks. 'The main event of the evening was to go to Storm's place,' explains Emo. 'You could just about fit ten people in his bedroom, and we'd all be sitting on the floor, smoking, trying not to wake his mother – asleep next door.'

'Storm had this amazing room,' recalls Po. 'It was covered in graffiti and montages of surrealist pictures cut out of magazines, and that sort of thing was absolutely unheard of back then. But the Syd's room was amazing, too. Syd's was full of paintings and little model cars and model aeroplanes and all sorts of things you might associate with a typical art student. But then I went there one day and there was this dodecahedron, quite big, about eighteen inches across, made out of balsa wood, and there was another one, nine inches across, and another smaller, all just hanging from the ceiling. He'd made them himself – these absolutely perfect models.'

Po was similarly intrigued by Syd's appearance and manner. 'I always have this memory of him in his room, walking around barefoot, but standing in this weird way of his on his tip-toes, sort of hovering, with his hair hanging down and a cigarette in his hand. Almost elf-like in a way. He had this style of dressing, terribly arty. He'd turn up in the pub wearing some blue and white matelot shirt, looking as though he'd just walked out of Montparnasse in the 1920s.'

Yet Barrett could be as elusive with his old schoolfriends as he was with his newer art school companions.

'He could be with a crowd of people and then suddenly disappear – gone,' says Po. 'He wouldn't tell you where he was going, and then you'd be with a crowd of people later on and he would suddenly appear. I don't think it was deliberate. I think he got easily bored and liked to go off and do his own thing. He had a great sense of humour but he could also suddenly withdraw from everything. One minute you'd be sitting in a room, getting stoned, and then the next minute he'd disappear.'

Libby Gausden recalls Barrett's disappearing acts: 'Instead of going to all the things we'd been invited to, he'd drive off and just sit in the Gog Magog hills. As soon as he bought his first car, he was always taking me to look at rivers and hills, which at the time I thought was all terribly boring. But Syd was into nature, when all the trendy people weren't.'

By late 1962, David Gilmour had joined a local band called The Ramblers, which already included rhythm guitarist John Gordon and ex-Mottoes' drummer Clive Welham. 'We were a semi-pro band, playing and earning,' says Welham now. 'Dave had come on a hell of a lot. I'd seen him playing about a year before and he wasn't up to it then, but you could tell he'd put a lot of work in since.'

'Dave and Syd were two of those guys you couldn't miss,' remembers Rick Wills, who would play bass guitar in one of Gilmour's later groups. 'I used to run into Dave at Ken Stevens' music shop. We'd both be trying out guitars and making a bloody nuisance of ourselves. Dave had an air about him, though – quite arrogant sometimes, an air of "I know it all". Syd had a look that was all his own. To be frank, I never took him seriously. He was one of those arty types who walked around with a Bob Dylan LP under one arm. Not a proper rock 'n' roller, I thought.'

However, others, including Mick Jagger, disagreed. Libby Gausden accompanied Syd to a Rolling Stones gig in a village hall in nearby Whittlesey. 'It must have been something the Stones had been contracted to do before they became famous,' says Libby. 'After the show, Mick Jagger came straight up to us out of everybody in the crowd. I remember it because he had this awful, put-on voice, and being from Cambridge we all spoke properly. He was asking about my clothes but he was also fascinated by Syd. He thought Syd looked like a very young Bill Wyman – the same dark hair and very thin.'

At a Bob Dylan show at London's Festival Hall, fashion designer Mary Quant, also in the audience, was, as Libby now puts it, 'very taken with Syd'. Back in Cambridge, older women at the parties thought

attended would be enchanted by Barrett, and pass him their telephone numbers. 'He used to ring the up,' admits Libby. 'But we'd both listen to what they said, and laugh ourselves silly when he arranged to meet them, then didn't turn up.'

At the same time, Gilmour was also moonlighting with another local group, The Newcomers, previously Chris Ian and The Newcomers, until Chris Ian quit and vocalist Ken Waterson took over. 'Dave had a poxy old Burns guitar and a crappy amp, but you could see he'd got it even then; he was bloody good,' Waterson later recalled.

With Syd Barrett's stint at the Cambridge School of Art coming to a close, his future plans still involved art rather than music. 'But I always thought his art was something to do while he was waiting for something to happen with his music,' says Libby Gausden.

In the summer of 1963, Syd travelled to London to attend an interview for Camberwell School of Art, even though it meant missing a Beatles gig. The sacrifice paid off and he was accepted. 'Syd desperately wanted to go to Chelsea art school but he couldn't get in,' reveals Libby. 'Then he found out that Camberwell was even trendier.'

That summer, he and Anthony Stern had staged an exhibition of their work above the Lion and Lamb pub in nearby Milton. Now studying at St John's College, Stern had been granted the use of studio space by the provost of the neighbouring Kings College. 'They were friends of my parents, so I was immensely privileged,' says Stern. 'Having this room offered me another chance to escape from my parents and gave me the opportunity to meet girls.'

Unfortunately, the exhibition was less successful. 'Syd's paintings were wild abstracts and still lives in oil on canvas; mine were rather feeble attempts at psychotic surrealism. We didn't sell anything.'

However, Stern's makeshift studio would provide a bolthole for Barrett to escape to. 'Syd and I would spend ages in there, having endless conversations about the nature of film and art and music. There was a man at Kings College called Reg Gadney, who made light boxes in his room. He showed us these things – they were like huge television screens behind which there were a series of mechanical gadgets and light projections. These were the sort of ideas that later became part of psychedelia, and which the Floyd used in their light shows. Syd and I were fascinated.'

Syd had previously experimented with home-made light shows with his art school friend John Gordon. When John moved into a flat in Clarendon Street, he and Syd would delight in projecting images on to the windows of the house opposite.

Through Anthony, Syd would make contact with another aspiring artist that year. Recently graduated from the university, Peter Whitehead was renting a studio in Cambridge's Grange Road. Later, as a film-maker, he would shoot the defining footage of the Syd-era Pink Floyd. For now, though, Barrett and his musical friends were simply 'the nameless group' that rehearsed in the room next to his studio. 'I think Syd was having an affair with the daughter of the owners of the house,' says Peter now. 'The louder his group rehearsed, the louder I put on my Bartók, Janáček and Wagner albums. I didn't like pop music. When Syd discovered I was a painter, he used to drift in and chat and ask me what I was listening to. I had no idea our paths would cross again.'

In the autumn, Barrett moved to London and began his degree course at Camberwell, where he was remembered as an enthusiastic, if single-minded student, surprising his tutors and other pupils with his insistence on using the same-sized brush for all his paintings. Among his compositions from the summer of 1964 was a portrait of pop singer Sandie Shaw, which he lovingly sent to her record company, only to hear nothing in response. London was exciting, but regular trips back to Cambridge brought him into contact with his old sparring partners.

Back at home, Andrew Rawlinson had become involved in staging some 'happenings' at the Round Church. Integral to these events was the participation of the audience. In the same spirit, Rawlinson bought a large map of the world, traced the outlines of fifty countries onto sheets of paper and then sent them out to other like-minded individuals with the message, 'Decorate this how you like and send it back to me'.

Syd was sent Russia, which he duly painted blue and returned. He later sent Rawlinson a book he had crafted called *Fart Enjoy*. Comprising seven sheets of cardboard taped together, its contents included snippets of poetry, doodles, pictures torn from magazines, a possible spoof letter entitled 'Dear Roger' ('How did the group get on at Essex?') A photo of a bare-breasted model is scrawled with the words 'Fuk, Suk and Lik'. Rawlinson described it as 'a mixture of austere bordering on the abstract and a blazing whimsy'.

However committed Syd may have been to his art, he still found himself drawn back to his musical haunts in Cambridge. During the summer holidays, he began playing guitar with The Hollerin' Blues (sometimes known as Barney and The Hollerin' Blues), during a return trip to Cambridge. Here, he came into contact with sixteen-year-old Matthew Scurfield, the half-brother of Ponji Robinson and a school-friend of The Hollerin' Blues' harmonica player, Pete Glass.

Scurfield would go on to become a theatre, TV and film actor. 'My father was what you might call "a romantic socialist", and sent me to a very rough secondary modern school in Cambridge,' he says now. 'I'd failed my 11-plus and ended up almost dropping out. My aunt was a very prominent psychiatrist in the area and I ended up at the Criterion, peddling pills that I'd taken from her medicine cabinet.'

Through what Matthew describes as 'the trafficking of medical contraband', he came into contact with Pip and Emo. They introduced him to Syd one evening in the Criterion. 'We clicked straight away because we were both interested in theatres, and Syd and I discovered we'd both built our own model theatres. Ponji and I both became good friends with him. I didn't even know he was a musician until I went to see The Hollerin' Blues at somewhere like the Dorothy Ballroom and there was Syd on guitar. He wasn't the best player in the world, but he certainly had an aura about him.'

By early 1965 The Hollerin' Blues had turned into Those Without, and Syd was back, playing guitar during the holidays. 'We played a couple of our best gigs ever with Syd, at the University Cellars and the Victoria Ballroom,' recalls drummer Stephen Pyle. 'He was on a visit from London and he'd got himself kitted out with a new Fender and a big Vox amp. The Kinks' single "You Really Got Me" had come out and Syd was thrilled with that. He kept playing it over and over again during band practice.'

Meanwhile, David Gilmour was making his own plans. If he passed his A-levels, it would mean going to university, which would take him away from the local music scene. Gilmour chose to drop out halfway through his exams. By now, his parents had returned permanently to the US and he was living alone in a flat in Mill Road. He'd also helped form a new band, Jokers Wild, which had coalesced around Gilmour, John Gordon and Clive Welham.

While Syd upped sticks to London, Gilmour stayed put. Jokers Wild's forte was five-part harmonies. 'We came together in the first place because we could all sing,' says Welham. Their setlist centred around songs by The Four Seasons, Sam and Dave, and The Beach Boys, performed in many clubs, parties and neighbouring airforce bases as would take them, including a regular Wednesday night booking at Les Jeux Interdits, a club in Cambridge's Victoria Ballroom, popular with foreign students from the neighbouring colleges. 'I think at one time we all had foreign girlfriends,' recalls Clive.



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